CANADA

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

TO OPEN THE SECOND SESSION
OF THE FORTIETH
PARLIAMENT OF CANADA

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Honourable Senators,
Members of the House of Commons,
Ladies and gentlemen,

In these uncertain times, when the world is threatened by a struggling economy, it is imperative that we work together, that we stand beside one another and that we strive for greater solidarity.

Today, in our democratic tradition, Canadians expect that their elected representatives will dedicate their efforts to ensure that Canada emerges stronger from this serious economic crisis.

Once again, the people's representatives have gathered to consider the priorities of another parliamentary session.

Each Throne Speech is a milestone on the remarkable 142-year Canadian journey. Your predecessors, too, were summoned to this chamber at times of great crisis: as Canada struggled to claim her independence, in the shadow of war, during the depth of the Great Depression and at moments when great policy division tugged the very bonds of this union.

Today we meet at a time of unprecedented economic uncertainty. The global credit crunch has dragged the world economy into a crisis whose pull we cannot escape. The nations of the world are grappling with challenges that Canada can address but not avoid.

The Government's agenda and the priorities of Parliament must adapt in response to the deepening crisis. Old assumptions must be tested and old decisions must be rethought. The global economy has weakened since Canadians voted in the last general election. In fact, it has weakened further since Parliament met last month.

Our Government has listened to Canadians who are concerned about how the worldwide recession is affecting their jobs, their savings and their communities. Our Government has reached out to Canadians in all regions, in all communities and from all walks of life.

Our Government has consulted widely:

- with those who work, those who invest, those who create jobs, those who build infrastructure and those who provide non-profit services;

- with municipal, provincial and territorial governments, Aboriginal leaders and representatives of communities;

- in fact, with everyone whose input might help chart a course through the present storm.

Our Government approached the dialogue in a spirit of open and non-partisan cooperation. There is no monopoly on good ideas because we face this crisis together. There can be no pride of authorship—only the satisfaction of identifying solutions that will work for all Canadians.

Acting on the constructive thoughts and suggestions that have been received, our Government will tomorrow present Canada's economic stimulus plan. The plan will protect our economy from immediate threat, while making investments to promote long-term growth.

The economic stimulus plan will be a plan of action.

- Our Government is stimulating the economy, both through direct government action and by encouraging private expenditure.

- Our Government is taking immediate action to build Canada through new investment in infrastructure.

- Our Government is acting to protect the stability of our financial system.

- Our Government is acting to ensure access to credit for businesses and consumers.

- Our Government is acting to support Canadian industries in difficulty—including forestry, manufacturing, automotive, tourism, agriculture—and to protect the families and communities who depend on those jobs.

- Our Government is acting to protect the vulnerable: the unemployed, lower-income Canadians, seniors, Aboriginal Canadians and others hit hardest by the global economic recession.

These actions will be targeted, they will inject immediate stimulus while promoting long-term growth and they will avoid a return to permanent deficits.

These actions will protect the jobs of today while readying our economy to create the jobs of tomorrow.

Canadians face a difficult year—perhaps several difficult years. In the face of such uncertainty, our Government has developed a clear and focused plan. Our Government will spend what is necessary to stimulate the economy, and invest what is necessary to protect our future prosperity.

As Canadians expect, the economy will be the focus of our Government's actions and of the measures placed before Parliament during the coming year. In pursuing measures to support the economy, our Government will also attend to the other important priorities that it set out in the Speech from the Throne to open the 40th Parliament.

The present crisis is new, but the imperative of concerted action is a challenge to which Parliament has risen many times in our history. What will sustain us today will be the same strengths of character that have pulled Canada through critical times before: unity, determination and constancy of purpose.

Honourable Members of the Senate,

Members of the House of Commons:

As you unite in common effort and in common cause, may Divine Providence be your guide and inspiration.